

Mailed From
Polk Youth Institute

UNITED STATES PENITENTIARY
BOX PMB
601 MCDONOUGH BLVD., S.E.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30315

GENERAL INMATE
CORRESPONDENCE
DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE — I.
DIVISION

PRISON

SUPERMAX
Received
DEC 26 2001
CORRECTIONAL INST.

THIS LETTER WAS SENT BY AN INMATE
WHO IS IN A STATE PRISON. THE STATE
IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR DEBTS INCURRED
OR FOR THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER.

ATLANTA GA 303
PM

MAILED
FROM A STATE
CORRECTIONAL

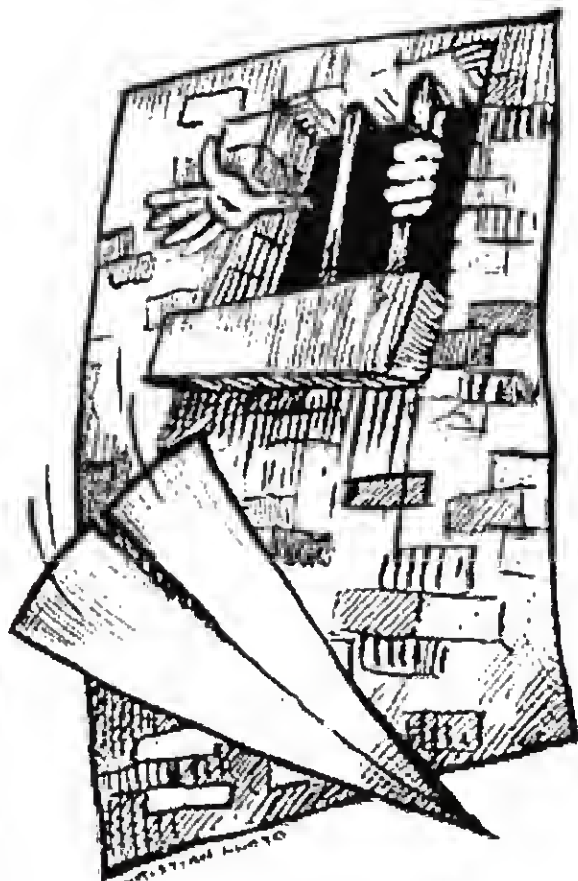
THIS LETTER HAS BEEN
MAILED FROM THE
WISCONSIN PRISON SYSTEM

Mailed From
Polk Youth Institute

MAILED
FROM A STATE
CORRECTIONAL INST

MAIL
FROM
CORRECTIONAL

STATE PRISON



THIS WAS MAILED BY AN
INMATE CONFINED AT A
STATE PRISON

NOV 19 2001
UNITED STATES
BOX PMB
601 MCDONOUGH
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
GENERAL INMATE
CORRESPONDENCE
DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE — INSTITUTIONAL
DIVISION

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PRISONER SUPPORT

UNITED STATES PENITENTIARY
BOX PMB
601 MCDONOUGH BLVD., S.E.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30315

Mailed From
Polk Youth Institute

THIS WAS MAILED BY AN
INMATE CONFINED AT A
WASHINGTON STATE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
FACILITY. ITS CONTENT MAY
BE UNCENSORED

GENERAL INMATE
CORRESPONDENCE • TEXAS
DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE — INSTITUTIONAL
DIVISION

STATE PRISON
GENERATED MAIL

MAILED FROM
SUPERMAX
Received
OCT 1 2001
CORRECTIONAL INST.

GENERAL INMATE
CORRESPONDENCE
DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE — INSTITUTIONAL
DIVISION

THIS LETTER HAS BEEN
MAILED FROM THE
WISCONSIN PRISON SYSTEM

053811 ☆ I-290 (07/93)

WRITING TO PRISONERS

One of the main problems that puts people off getting involved in supporting prisoners is a feeling of being intimidated about writing to a prisoner for the first time. It is very hard to write a letter to someone you don't know: people find they don't know what to say, they feel there are things they can't talk about, or that prisoners won't be interested in what they have to say. Well this is a problem most of us have had to get over, so we've drawn up some suggestions to help you. Obviously they aren't rigid guidelines, and we don't pretend to have solved all problems here. Different people will write different letters. Hopefully the suggestions provided will be of some use.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Some prisons restrict the number of letters a prisoner can write or receive, and they normally have to come up with their own stamps and envelopes. Most prisoners don't have a lot of money. So don't necessarily expect a reply to a letter or card. Some prisons allow stamps, SASE, or embossed envelopes to be sent in with a letter but its best to check with the prison in question. Letters can be and occasionally are stopped, read, delayed, diverted, and destroyed by prison authorities. If you suspect your letters have or will be tampered with by the screws, you can send it certified mail, which unfortunately costs more but then if the prisoner says he/she never got it or items were missing you will be able to track it and see who signed for it (info that will come in handy if the letter was withheld illegally or inconsistent with prison regulations). You should always use some sort of return address (on the letter as well as the envelope), not just so the prisoner can reply, but also because some prisons don't allow letters in without one. Of course it doesn't have to be your living address, A P.O. Box or mail

For more information on political prisoners, the anti-prison movement, and general prisoner support lookup, contact, or read one of the following groups, websites, or books below.

GROUPS

Jacksonville ABC
P.O. Box 350392
Jacksonville, FL
32235
Email- jax@abcf.net
website www.abcf.net

Prisoners Advocacy Network
(PAN-OHIO)
P.O. Box 14162
Columbus, OH 43214
Email- panohio3@aol.com
Website www.pan-ohio.org
(send \$2 for current newsletter and
Merchandise catalog)

Prison Activist Resource Center
(PRAC)
P.O. Box 339
Berkley, CA 94701
Email- Prac@prisonactivist.org
Website www.prisonactivist.org

BOOKS

1. The ceiling of America
By Daniel Burton Rose
2. All Things Censored
By Mumia Abu-Jamal
3. Assata By Assata
Shakur
4. In the spirit of crazy
horse By Peter
Mathiessen
5. Snitch Culture By Jim
Redden
6. Prison memoirs of an
Anarchist By Alexander
Berkman

WEBSITES

1. www.leftbankbooks.com
2. www.ainfos.ca
3. www.mumia.org
4. www.judibari.org
5. www.prisonersucks.com

*If you don't support your prisoners then what the
fuck are you about?*

*Rita Bo Brown - Former US political
prisoner/Out of Control Lesbian Committee*

system, etc. While it's a good idea to have political clarity about incarceration and the criminal justice system, its not correct to romanticize a prisoner, anything they might be locked up for (especially a "social crime") and their lives. They're people just like you and me and have strengths and weaknesses. It is dangerous to assume anyone (free or jailed) can overcome all their personal weaknesses, or to be completely truthful are not dealing with stressful situations in negative ways. Be mindful that over the years some prisoners have learned manipulative and abusive behaviors.

Do not discuss potentially illegal political action with a prisoner. Prisoners can and have been implicated for outside actions that violate the law. If authorities find such information in the hands of prisoners possession they could get administrative punishment (a more restrictive security reclassification, locked in the "hole", loss of privileges, etc.) and/or added time.

Do not attempt to place political judgments on prisoners experiences. Some prisoners write groups and publications to get pen pals and may not completely agree with their views, but read it for information. Some may have converted to Islam or Christianity. Some have views that may seem backward. Rather than attack (or talk down to) a prisoner, its better to be polite but firm and avoid topics you find objectionable. Do not argue with or insult a prisoner because of their religion (or lack of), preferences, or experiences. Its best to just break off contact if you are unable to continue constructive dialog due to extreme differences in opinion. It is a very bad idea to get into/trade insults or threats with a prisoner.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WAS COMPILED FROM SEVERAL ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS SOURCES.

drop address will work. Generally it's a good idea to ask the prisoner in your first letter if there's any mail restrictions you should be aware of.

WRITING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Say who you are, and if it's relevant that you're from such and such a group. Some people reckon it's better to be upfront about your politics as well, to give prisoners the choice to stay in contact with you or not. Say where you heard about them and their case. The first letter can be reasonably short, maybe only a postcard. Obviously when you get to know people better you'll have more to talk about. If you are writing to a "framed" prisoner, and you believe them to be innocent, it helps to say so, as it gives people confidence to know that you believe them. Some people when they write to prisoners, are afraid of talking about their lives, what they are up to, etc. thinking this may depress people banged up for years or that they are not interested in your life. Although in some cases this may be true, on the whole a letter is the brightest point of the day for most prisoners. prison life is dead boring, and any news that livens it up, whether it's about people they know or not, is generally welcome. Especially if you didn't know them before they went to prison, they want to know about you, what your life is like, etc. Use common sense, don't write about anything that is likely to get a prisoner in shit with the screws, or get you or anyone else in trouble with the cops.

THEY'RE IN THERE FOR US, WE'RE OUT HERE FOR THEM

For people imprisoned from our movements and struggles i.e. strikers, social uprising rioters (example in April of 2001 nearly 100 poor mostly black folks got prison time for actions during the Cincinnati rebellion that followed the

police shooting of an unarmed black youth), and in some cases members of revolutionary groups; basically politicians, it's vital to keep them involved or in some instances to introduce them to ongoing resistance. Telling them about actions, sending them magazines if they want them, and discussing ideas and strategies with them. Use your head though. Some people will not want to hear about the class war, but will want to keep their heads down and finish their sentence. 'Politicians', prison rebels, and jailhouse lawyers tend to get singled out the most for harassment and beatings by screws.

THROUGH THE WALLS

At the end of the day, writing prisoners is about common sense and using your head. Most prisoners are not the mad beasts corporate media would have us believe they are ordinary folks just like you. Prisons are there to isolate people, so we must be actively keeping the link to the outside world open. Direct contact via letters is one of the most vital ways of making sure prisoners are not abandoned to the control of the state.

A few dos and don'ts on writing prisoners whose backgrounds/politics you may not know.

Use a "neutral" address, such as a Post Office Box, for correspondence. Do not divulge sensitive personal information (i.e. your home address, phone number, credit card and bank details, people's full names, etc.) to a prisoner, particularly one you have never dealt with before. This is for your security and that of the prisoner. Be aware that authorities often read these letters and sensitive information can get into the wrong hands. Occasionally, prisoners have misused this information as well. Unless a

family member no one under 18 should be writing a prisoner.

Be patient Prisoners may not write back or it may take awhile. They may occasionally sound cynical, angry or disinterested in their words - keep in mind many "supporters" or people who've written before may have made/broken promises, lied to them, or they just had a tough day and are venting it out on paper. Responding to an angry letter with more anger is not helpful.

If a prisoner is getting out in the near future, do not offer your place to stay (no matter how desperate they sound) unless you have corresponded for a significant amount of time and are in contact with both a parole officer and a prison intermediary (prison Chaplain, or counselor). Even in cases like this, it's far more helpful to a prisoner to help them secure employment and develop a support base (whether it's through his/her church, family, friends, etc.). With nearly all parole releases there's a legal process that will need to be followed by both you and the prisoner. Don't land yourself in a bad position that could get you in trouble and/or the ex-convict put back in jail.

DON'T MAKE PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP. Many well meaning people write letters of support to a prisoner, or make offers to help out of good will. Unfortunately most never follow through and build up a false hope in a prisoner. Be honest with what you are able to do for a prisoner. Don't take on more than you are able to make time for. If 1 letter of support is all you can manage then that's fine.

Do not romanticize prisons or prisoners. Many activists have an idea about who prisoners are, why they're locked up, the